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## **LATEST CRIME STATISTICS RELEASED – NORTH DAKOTA HAS LOWEST VIOLENT CRIME RATE IN NATION**

BISMARCK – Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem today released the latest crime statistics for North Dakota. The 2002 crime report shows that North Dakota is one of the safest states in the nation.

The state is ranked as the safest state in the nation for violent crime per capita. The “violent crime” category includes murder, rape, robbery and assault. “This ranking will not surprise anyone who lives here,” said Stenehjem. “We take pride in getting to know our neighbors and taking an interest in what’s going on in our own neighborhoods. That sense of community is what keeps North Dakotans safe, and puts the state at the top of the list every year.”

Drug arrests have increased steadily over the past decade. Drug arrests increased 5.7% in 2002, from 1,658 in 2001 to 1,752. Juveniles accounted for 16.5 percent of drug arrests, down from last year. The arrests for the drug category that include meth have increased by 24 percent since 2001.

“Meth arrests are up in part because law enforcement is getting better at busting meth labs, which is directly related to the level of community cooperation and involvement. Law enforcement has received tips of suspicious drug-related activity from store clerks, hunters, and neighbors all across the state,” said Stenehjem. “The 2002 report confirms the need to continue and expand community drug prevention and awareness programs, to give the public the information they need to identify and report illegal drug trafficking in their neighborhoods.”

The total number of arrests reported by local law enforcement agencies decreased from 29,638 in 2001 to 29,145 in 2002. Approximately ten percent of the total arrests were for “crime index” offenses.

“Crime index offenses” include the violent crimes of murder/non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault, and the property crimes of burglary, theft and motor vehicle theft. Juveniles accounted for almost one-half of crime index offense arrests.

In 2002, 15,239 crime index offenses were reported to the North Dakota Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program by local law enforcement agencies. This is a 5.7 percent increase from the 2001 total of 14,411.

Violent crime comprised 3.6 percent of the total index offenses reported. The total number of violent crimes reported was 553. Although this is an increase of 7.6 % from 2001, it is lower than the 2000 total, 562.

There were six murders identified in 2002, four of which involved domestic violence. Of the six murders, two victims died as a result of gunshot wounds. An analysis of the homicides for 1978-2002 indicates that 50 percent of deaths involved domestic violence, and 51 percent of all deaths resulted from firearms use.

Property crimes accounted for 96.4 percent of the total index offenses reported in 2002. The number of property crimes increased 5.7 percent from the 2001 total of 13,897 to 14,686 in 2002. Over \$12.4 million dollars worth of property was reported stolen in 2002.

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